

SEVEN MIRACLES OF CALVARY

Message by Willis E. Bishop
March 17, 1996

Reading from "Our Daily Bread":

Years ago an old pioneer journeyed westward across the great plains until he came to an abrupt halt at the edge of the Grand Canyon. He gawked at the sight before him-- a vast chasm 1 mile deep, 18 miles across, and stretching out of sight. He gasped, "Something must have happened here!"

Believe it or not - there were seven Miracles of Calvary!

- I. The first one is recorded in Luke 23:44 and 45: "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened."

Sometime before this the Pharisees and Sadducees had tempted Jesus to show them a sign out of heaven (Matt. 16:1), and now, suddenly, for three hours darkness was over the land--at midday. The darkness veiled the dying moments of our Lord from the reviling crowd.

The darkness hid those moments when our Savior was paying for your sins and mine, which He brought to an end with the victorious cry, "It is finished!" and dismissed His spirit into the hands of the Father.

Well might the sun in darkness hide
and shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty maker, died
for man, the creature's sin.

- II. The second Miracle is recorded in Matthew 27:51: "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom."

That veil was 30 feet by 60 feet in size, and the thickness of a man's hand. It is said that it took 300 priests to handle it.

At the cry of the Lord, "It is finished," the veil was torn in two, as though by an invisible hand, from the top to the bottom, thus opening the way from the Holy Place in the temple into the Holy of Holies.

As the Apostle Paul explains in Hebrews 10:20, this miracle symbolized the special privilege now opened for sinners to come into the presence of a holy God.

No more veil! God bids me enter
by the new and living way --
Not in trembling hope I venture,
boldly, I His call obey.

SEVEN MIRACLES OF CALVARY - Bishop

There with Him, my God, I meet --
God upon the Mercy Seat. [Author unknown]

- III. The third Miracle is also recorded in Matthew 27:51, "and the earth did quake and the rocks were split."

This was a miracle of timing
-- at the instant of Christ's cry
-- at the instant of the rending of the veil.

This was a miracle of strength.
-- The veil was torn,
-- the rocks were split
so that the people feared greatly,
and yet, the cross was not shaken!

- IV. The fourth Miracle is recorded in Matthew 27:57: "and the graves of the saints were opened."

This was a miracle of intelligence.
-- The graves only of saints were opened, leaving
the unbelievers' tombs undisturbed.

-- These graves were in the vicinity of Jerusalem and
could not be closed again or else the people
would have become defiled and could not eat
the Passover.

This was a miracle of testimony.
-- To look at the open tombs for three days and
marvel at its testimony to a sovereign God
in such precise control of Nature, and a
testimony to the death on the cross that
occasioned it all!

- V. The fifth Miracle is recorded in John 20:6-8: "Then cometh Simon Peter following [John] and went into the sepulchre and seeth the linen cloths lying there, and the cloth that had been about His [Jesus'] head, not lying with the linen cloths but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in [John] also, and he saw and believed."

This is a miracle of the power of the resurrection body.
-- Those grave clothes with their winding and soaking
with perfumes bound the body so tight that when, on
another occasion, Lazarus was raised from the dead
in John 11, Jesus had to command them to "loose him
and let him go."

-- But our Lord's resurrection body simply passed through
the grave clothes, even as He later entered a closed
room with the disciples present.

SEVEN MIRACLES OF CALVARY - Bishop

-- And the tightly wound grave clothes simply crumpled into position where they were.

And John saw and believed the resurrection!

- VI. The sixth Miracle is recorded in Matthew 27:52-53: "And many bodies of the saints that slept were raised and came out of the graves after [Christ's] resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

This was a miracle of witness.

-- Christ came out of the grave as the "firstborn" from the dead - with a resurrection body.

-- Now these were brought forth after three days to witness that indeed there is victory in Christ over sin, death and the grave.

Isn't it a wonderful thought that because of all this we too, as believers, shall live forever in resurrected and glorified bodies!

- VII. The seventh Miracle of Calvary continues even today.

-- It is the supreme miracle.

-- It is the reason for all the other miracles.

But the Apostle Paul says it this way in I Corinthians 15:

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried - He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures."

We stand today before an open, empty tomb and the witness of the miracles that attend this account.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." And what thinking person can say other than, "Lord, I believe."?

Luke records in Acts 6:7: "A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." And no wonder. They were all on duty when the veil was torn in two - and they were present when all the rest of the events took place. Yes, they believed!

Quite possibly the Roman centurion at the cross believed, for he said, "Truly, this man was God's Son."

John believed when he saw the grave cloths. The Apostle Thomas

believed when he saw the hands and side of the risen Savior, and he confessed, "My Lord and my God!"

Say -- do you believe? Are you a part of that continuing seventh Miracle of Calvary?